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ABSTRACT

The Newton Polytechnic Center (NPC) at Iowa's Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), is a cooperative effort among DMACC, Iowa State University (ISU), the City of Newton, the Newton Community School District, and Maytag Corporation to provide the community with innovative educational services. The NPC focuses on the development of personal/social skills, technical expertise, and business excellence in the context of continuous improvement in an international environment. Programs provided include a comprehensive schedule of college credit classes, continuing education courses, industry training, adult basic and general education development courses, alternative high school programming, ISU courses, and community services. A planning group comprised of representatives from the partners meets regularly to identify needs and schedule appropriate courses, activities, and programs. Based on the NPC experience, techniques for establishing effective partnerships include listening to the needs of all partners, deferring financial considerations to the final stages of discussion, and sharing leadership on an issue basis. Advantages to such cooperative partnerships include maximizing resource use, fostering communication between groups with common educational interests, and responding to the needs of the community. Current projects planned by the NPC include a software center to provide training to employees, a University of Iowa Executive Masters of Business Administration Program, and an industrial training lab. (TGI)

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A NEW COMMUNITY COLLEGE CENTER WITH FIVE PARTNERS A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE?

A PRESENTATION

AT THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL MEETING

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(100th, Chicago, IL, March 26-29, 1995)

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The concept of "partnering" is being embraced by public and private organizations as resources become increasingly scarce. The new Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) Newton Polytechnic Center illustrates how five different and unique public and private organizations cooperated to create a new entity which marshals these resources. The five organizations: DMACC; Iowa State University (ISU); the City of Newton, Iowa; the Newton Community School District and Maytag Corporation each made a financial and leadership commitment to the center. The resulting program has focused on providing a wide variety innovative educational services for the partners.

MISSION

The Newton Polytechnic Center is devoted to lifelong learning of individuals from the region and its enterprises focusing on development of personal/social skills, technical expertise and business excellence in the context of continuous improvement in an international environment. Polytechnic means a "multifaceted joint public/private venture" and "denotes skills in many arts", with programs focusing on business, technology and applied science.

The mission of the DMACC Newton Polytechnic Facility is unique, when compared to DMACC's four other campuses and similar two-year institutions throughout the United States. This uniqueness stems from (1) the model of cooperation and partnering between a community college (DMACC), a major university (Iowa State University), a Fortune 500 corporation (Maytag) and a city

government (Newton, Iowa), (2) the cooperative planning of programs and activities which respond to the needs of the various partners and (3) a willingness to experiment with creative approaches to programming, especially related to business and industry.

Partnerships are successful to the extent they meet the individual needs of each party more successfully than the party could meet its own needs. In creating this partnership each partner identified specific needs which could be addressed through the collaborative arrangement.

THE FACILITY

The Center is located on an eight acre tract adjacent to the offices of the Maytag Corporation in Newton, Iowa, a city of 15,000 located 30 miles east of Des Moines. The modern, 100,000 square foot facility is housed in a converted factory building and contains traditional college classrooms, an interactive communication center (Iowa Communications Network), computer labs and the DMACC/Marriott Conference Center which includes a 325 seat auditorium. A portion of the building is leased to the Maytag Corporation for its training center. The center was conceived, constructed and occupied in 14 months.

The process of transforming a former defense plant into an innovative, state-of-the-art center illustrates the creative vision of the five partners. In fact, Buildings magazine identified the project as one of five winners in a national building modernization competition.

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PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Center provides a window of access--(1) to students, citizens, workers, institutions and businesses who will come to the facility for direct participation and, (2) a window to the services, information and technology which is available at DMACC and ISU and throughout the world. The Center is truly an educational mall where people come to "shop" for diverse educational "products". The campus "delivers" programs and services for a broad spectrum of "customers". The product is delivered in differing formats and time frames using varying providers. Product quality is assured by a liberal refund policy and constant evaluation.

These functions are provided at the Center.

- **College Credit**--A comprehensive schedule of college credit classes are offered, (day, evening and Saturday). Courses are offered in all the traditional liberal arts disciplines (English, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, Humanities) and in Business, Computer Applications, and technologies (Manufacturing, Management).

- **Continuing Education**--A variety of short courses in business, industry, licensure and personal enrichment are available. Selected apprenticeships courses are also scheduled.

- **Industry Training**--DMACC works closely with area business and industries to develop and offer specialized training which focuses on updating the skills of their employees.

- **Personal Development/Career Planning**--DMACC counselors and advisors assist students in assessing goals and developing specific educational plans. Comprehensive student financial aid planning are available.

- **ABE/GED (Adult Basic Education/General Education Development)**--Classes and a testing center are at the site.

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- **High School Programming**

  -- The 'Basics and Beyond' alternative high school is housed in the facility.

  -- High school completion courses are available.

  -- College credit classes are offered to high school students under the post-secondary enrollment options act.

- **Iowa State University Courses**--ISU schedules engineering extension and selected graduate courses at the center. The Iowa State Jasper County Extension Office is located on site for specific services.

- **Community Services**--The campus is available to business and community groups for a variety of programs, displays and other events.

- **Conferences and Meetings**--The full-service DMACC/Marriott Conference Center accommodates meetings of small, medium or large groups. The Center has a 325 seat auditorium with full audio/visual services, including Marriott food.

OPERATIONS

A planning group comprised of representatives from the business/education partners (Maytag, DMACC, and ISU) meets regularly to identify needs and schedule appropriate courses, activities and programs. The focus is **how** cooperation can take place to expand opportunities. No one party dominates, although the college serves as a facilitator, and a broker, between other partners. A unique feature of this approach is its ability to address a broad spectrum of individual and employer needs at variety of levels (from basic education through advanced engineering courses).

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PRACTICES/TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERING

Successful educational/industry/community partnerships require these practices and techniques:

-- Listen to the needs of each of the parties.

-- Structure issues into win/win situations.

-- Defer financial considerations to the final stage of the discussion.

-- Be honesty in all statements/minimize posturing.

-- Hold few meetings/make them short and productive.

-- Take action, or decide not to act quickly/don't defer issues

-- Share leadership on an issue basis.

ADVANTAGES OF COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

-- Maximizes resource use

-- Fosters communication between groups which have common educational interests

-- Insures a relevant program which is responsive to the needs of the community

-- Encourages mutual support of the initiative between the partners

-- Increases the likelihood of "outside" resource acquisition because of the united front presented by the partners

-- Develops a unique synergy among groups which commonly do not have close associations

-- Portrays a positive public image of cooperation by each of the partners

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DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP MODEL IN YOUR COMMUNITY

-- Identify a common interest or goal which can serve as the basis for the partnership

-- Determine what each party can bring to the partnership (ideas, financing, access to new groups)

-- Identify the "lead" partner and assign responsibility for leadership.

-- Be willing to surrender some autonomy in return for greater gains.

-- Develop a clear mission statement through a cooperative input process which provides input from all partners

-- Commit key ideas and operation plans to writing.

-- Specify how ongoing communication will be occur.

- Encourage long-term commitments to ensure continuity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are suggested for improving education/industry linkages.

- **Be patient**--begin cooperative planning with a single program or course and let the relationship build on its success.

- **Be responsive**--listen to input from the partners and attempt to meet their needs.

- **Be introspective**-work cooperatively at each stage to evaluate actions and activities--share responsibility for successes and shortcomings.

- **Be open**--abandon the "traditional" roles which often resulted in alienation between educators and other groups. Be willing to experiment with new models.

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THE FUTURE

It is difficult to predict the scope and operation of the partnership in the future. Our past experience shows we underestimated the potential and creative imaginations of the partners. Here are several projects which are currently in the planning stages.

-- **Software Center**--This project involves DMACC, Maytag and a host of other area businesses and industries in a program where the industries would provide financial support and advice to establish and maintain a structure through which DMACC can provide relevant training to employees.

-- **University of Iowa Executive MBA Program**--The current Maytag, in house, MBA courses will be expanded into a articulated, three-year course sequence which is offered on site in Newton.

-- **Industrial Training Lab**--Maytag and several other area industries will support the development of a industrial training facility in which DMACC will provide relevant training.

-- **Conferences**--The construction of a new 80-room hotel adjacent to the Center will provide the opportunity for a substantial expansion of conferences in the DMACC/Marriott Conference Center.

-- **Joint projects**--DMACC, Maytag and Iowa State University are developing a work place literacy grant which will be expanded to include other manufacturers after it is piloted.

CONCLUSION

This unique partnership, focused around the new Newton DMACC Polytechnic Center, has stimulated business/school/city/educational relationships in the short 18 months of operation. The scope of activities continues to grow as the partnership expands its membership to include additional partners. It is viewed as an overwhelming success.

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